



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

WEST BANK/GAZA

USAID/COMPETE MONTHLY REPORT

February 1, 2015 – February 28, 2015

March 15, 2015

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government. It was prepared by DAI.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------------------|--|
| AHA | Arab Hotels Association |
| B2B | Business to Business |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| COP | Chief of Party |
| CHS | Certified Hospitality Supervisor |
| EU | European Union |
| FY2 | Fiscal Year 2 (USAID/Compete) |
| Geo-MIS | Geographical Management Information System |
| GLOBALGAP | Global Good Agricultural Practice |
| HCCI | Hebron Chamber of Commerce and Industry |
| HLITOA | Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| IOS | Internet Operating System |
| MBA | Masters of Business Administration |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MEPS | Middle East Payment Services |
| MIT | Massachusetts Institute of Technology |
| MoA | Ministry of Agriculture |
| MoTA | Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities |
| MoU | Memorandum of |
| NSFT | National Association for the Specialty Food Trade |
| PCARD | Palestinian Center for Agricultural Research & Development |
| PITA | Palestine Information Technology Association |
| PMEP | Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan |
| PPIS | Plant Protection Inspection Service |
| PPSQ | Plant Protection Safety and Quality |
| PSI | Palestine Standards Institute |
| RFQ | Request for Quotations |
| SME's | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| SOW | Scope of Work |
| UNIDO | United Nations Industrial Development Organization |
| USAID | United States Agency For International Development |
| USDA | U.S. Department for Agriculture |
| USMAC | US Market Access |

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Supporting Post-Harvest Facilities – During the last week of February, Al Forat Company, which previously established forward contracts with local and Jordanian companies, completed the installation of three cooling rooms. The vendor also completed the training necessary to operate the rooms appropriately. This is part of the USAID/Compete initiative to strengthen the potato and carrot subsector through the provision of cost-shared, post-harvest equipment for three companies: Top Field Company, Al Furat, and Buqeah and Al Farah Farms. During the base period, these companies were assisted in forward contracting with local and international companies, resulting in a need for improved equipment to maintain supplies. With new cooling rooms and packing houses, high quality produce will be provided to their clients.

Upgrading Commercial Tourism Infrastructure – In February, an official inauguration for Bethlehem Gallery took place. The initiative rehabilitated and furnished the Arab Woman Union building to operate as a gallery, gift shop, and restaurant. The project aspires to provide tourists with attractions and services in Bethlehem additional to the Nativity Church, extending the length of stay and expenditures of visitors. This is part of the USAID/Compete initiative to aid the expansion and improvement of tourist infrastructure at key sites throughout the West Bank.

Promoting Multinational Partnerships – In February, Jaffa.net won the 2015 Mobility Innovation Award for the MENA region. The ceremony was organized by Oracle, held in Dubai, and attended by more than 300 companies from the region. USAID supported Jaffa Net Company to develop the Head-UP Application that helps users to manage his or her online time by blocking certain applications (such as Facebook, Whatsapp, etc.) during certain timeframes chosen by the user. Head-UP Tribe is the startup company which Jaffa Net supports as the developing and technology partner.

New Technology for Environmental Issues – In February, USAID/Compete conducted a field visit to Hebron to meet with ZmZm Company, the largest Palestinian plastic producing company, to discuss the use of stone waste to develop calcium carbonate (CaCO₃) filler, an essential input for the plastic production process. This is part of the USAID initiative encouraging creative solutions to environmental issues in the West Bank by generating uses for sludge waste in the stone and marble sector.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS BY SECTOR

AGRIBUSINESS

Summary of Activities

Agricultural Land Expansion – USAID continued cooperative discussions as part of Kerry’s initiative to develop Area C in the West Bank for Palestinian agricultural use. The agreement allows Palestinian farmers to irrigate designated lands, which will increase their production capabilities.

On February 2nd, a meeting was held at Beit El with the Israeli Civil Administration (CA), USAID, and the design companies to discuss the CA design requirements for the three Area C water projects.

Introducing New Water Sources – USAID is pursuing treated waste water (TWW) as a solution to the largest sectoral impediment for agricultural production in the West Bank: water shortages.

On February 12th, a kick off meeting was held under the auspices of Nablus Municipality to launch the pipe network design for the area to be irrigated by the Nablus West Treated Waste Water Plant. A presentation of the design phases was conducted by the design company, CDG Community Development Group, followed by a discussion. Attendees included the Ministry of Agriculture, the Palestinian Water Authority, the Environmental Quality Authority, the Palestinian Standard Institute, four village councils, the Near East Foundation, KFW, farmers associations, and water user associations.

On February 24th, a field trip was carried out to Al Jalameh near Jenin to update USAID about the progress of the project. The trip aimed to coordinate and share experience with other donors and to introduce the project to Portland Trust, who was also present. They are considering a similar TWW reuse project in Jericho upon the completion of Jericho WWTP. The trip included: a visit to Al Jalameh WWTP and a meeting with the operator; a visit to the project lands and a meeting with farmers; and a meeting with the representative of Marj Bin Amer Water Users Association.

Upgrading Strawberry Farm Technology –

USAID/Compete is assisting the high value-added strawberry subsector to increase productivity, improve strawberry quality, and meet export standards. In 2014, strawberry farmers worked on a cost-share basis to upgrade irrigation infrastructure and install the hanging system. The new technology enabled increased production rates, improved quality, and early harvests, which sold at double the seasonal average.

On February 7th, a field visit took place to one of the strawberry farms with USAID Mission Director Dave Harden and USAID Administrator’s Assistant, Paige Alexander. The farmer, Osama Abu Rub, shared his successes from the intervention, having produced around 15 tons valued at US \$52,000, and his plans to produce seedlings in the future. Following the site visit, the USAID officials met with 20 farmers from other agribusiness subsectors to discuss the challenges and opportunities they face.



USAID Administrator’s Assistant Paige Alexander meeting with Palestinian farmers.

Supporting Production Facilities – USAID/Compete is strengthening targeted export-ready subsectors by assisting with resource upgrades that otherwise hold the sector back. Under this initiative, Al Hithnawi, a seed and spice packing company, is upgrading their production facilities to provide new products: herb and seed oils. Al Hithnawi's need for large quantities of local produce for raw materials will also further stimulate the local market, benefitting over 100 local suppliers.

From February 5th through 8th, Al Hithnawi visited the two manufacturers in China that will supply the new equipment. The equipment was tested and approved by the owner, Mr. Basheer Hithnawi, in accordance with specifications. In addition, Mr. Hithnawi received four days of training from the manufacturer's engineers on operating and maintaining the equipment.

Supporting Post-Harvest Facilities – USAID/Compete is strengthening the potato and carrot subsector through the provision of cost-shared, post-harvest equipment for three companies: Top Field Company, Al Furat, and Buqeah and Al Farah Farms. During the base period, these companies were assisted in forward contracting with local and international companies, resulting in a need for improved equipment to maintain supplies. With new cooling rooms and packing houses, high quality produce will be provided to their clients.

During the last week of February, Al Forat Company, which previously established forward contracts with local and Jordanian companies, completed the installation of three cooling rooms. The vendor also completed the training necessary to operate the rooms appropriately.

Transforming Product Packaging – USAID/Compete assists Palestinian companies to upgrade the marketing and packaging of goods to meet standards and penetrate new markets. Earlier this year, Compete worked with Al Aqaba Rural Women's Society (ARWS), a women's cooperative with about 60 members from Tubas that generates products from raw materials, and Jusor Company for Investment & Agricultural Marketing, a local Palestinian marketing company, to design new packaging for ARWS products. By upgrading to bag-in-bag packaging for dry herbs, ARWAS can now supply products to local hotels and meet international standards, enabling them to fetch higher profits and provide for new distribution channels.

During the last week of February, ARWS successfully installed the herbs filling and packaging machine and the wrapping machine. The vendor also completed the training necessary to operate the machines appropriately.

Milestones

- The pipe network design for the area to be irrigated by the Nablus West Treated Waste Water Plant was launched.
- The owner of Al Hithnawi, Mr. Basheer Hithnawi, completed four days of training on operating and maintaining equipment for herb and seed oil production.
- Al Forat Company completed the installation of three cooling rooms.
- Al Forat Company also completed the training necessary to operate the rooms appropriately.
- ARWS successfully installed the herbs filling and packaging machine and the wrapping machine.
- ARWS also completed the training necessary to operate the machines appropriately.

Lessons Learned

A few hard frosts took place during January and February, potentially threatening the development of new crops. However, in the Al Buqaiha plain, near Tamoun, mango and avocado crops did well despite record cold weather. This indicates that the area provides good conditions for these particular crops, therefore should be further developed in the region.

TOURISM

Summary of Activities

Destination Marketing – USAID is supporting a pilot project to develop Bethlehem, the most visited city in the West Bank, into a southern West Bank destination hub for tourism. After developing Bethlehem, this approach will be scaled up to fund similar work in Jericho for the Dead Sea area and Nablus for the northern West Bank, increasing the accessibility and resources available to tourists in the West Bank.

On February 6th, USAID/Compete, Bethlehem Municipality, and local youth councils held a 5K Run in Bethlehem. More than 500 participants attended, mainly made up of youth from throughout the West Bank. The running route went through Bethlehem's landmarks and newly renovated tourism sites under the CCHP contract to market them and highlight the link between the new attractions. The event was concluded with an awards ceremony and a musical performance. USAID Mission Director David Harden, visiting USAID Assistant Administrator Paige Alexander, and Mayor of Bethlehem Municipality Verra Baboun all attended the event.



USAID Mission Director Dave Harden preparing for the run with Palestinian youth.

Urban Rehabilitation – USAID/Compete is working with the Center of Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP) on urban rehabilitation efforts in Bethlehem, Bethany, and Burqin. The interventions are improving urban planning, zoning, and beautification to introduce new and improved Palestinian products and services for an enhanced tourist experience.

On February 4th, CCHP conducted a workshop in Burqin to present the first draft of Burqin's Conservation and Management Plan and a list of potential future interventions to be considered in the town. The event was attended by the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, the Mayor of Burqin Municipality, Compete, CCHP, and key stakeholders, to ensure full support and understanding from all parties. The plan will be finalized during spring 2015.

During February, the fifth Bethlehem intervention, King David Street, was completed, including an initial hand over to Bethlehem Municipality. The project adjusted the slope of the street to



Completion of King David Street in Bethlehem.

provide an alternative roadway for tourist buses and provided pick up and drop off areas. This will organize vehicle flow and reduce traffic on Star Street.

During February, the urban rehabilitation and beautification at Bethany's Historic Center was completed, including an initial hand over to the Bethany Municipal Council. Civil works, tiling, landscaping, new lighting fixtures, and new street furniture were included to improve visitor experiences and increase their time spent in the old town.



Completion of Bethany's historic center.

Improved Branding Strategies – USAID/Compete supports the design of a new branding strategy and messaging guideline to increase awareness and unify the image of the West Bank tourism sector. Under this initiative, the Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association (HLITOA) is re-branding their image and will assist local tour operators in utilizing the new strategy. Green Team Global, a US-based subcontractor, performed a site assessment in December to develop HLITOA's new brand and a draft of the West Bank-specific branding strategy.

On February 11th, USAID/Compete and HLITOA launched the branding strategy to members, who learned about the strategy and provided feedback.

Local Study Tours – USAID/Compete organizes study tours to local sites to facilitate input from HLITOA members and other key stakeholders, all of which play a critical role in developing, packaging, and promoting tourism products. There are three key purposes to the study tours: ensure destination enhancements are attractive and practical; ensure the sites meet the needs and interests of visitor markets; and facilitate visitor and tour operator use.

On February 5th and 12th, HLITOA held two study tours visiting Nablus Sabastiya and Battier.



Tour companies participating in the study tour to Sabastiya.

Developing Tourism Resources – USAID/Compete is supporting the development of Visit Palestine, an online destination travel guide, as a commercially viable resource to guide foreign and local visitors in Bethlehem and the Holy Land. Visit Palestine is expanding their resources for tourists by establishing a tourist information office (TIO) in the heart of the Bethlehem with staff speaking nine languages, redeveloping their website (www.VisitPalestine.ps in English, Arabic, Spanish, and Italian), and developing a mobile application to help visitors with special features such as planning, booking, maps, and city guides.

Visit Palestine highlighted progress in several areas during January to mid-February, including: establishing six new product lines and eight new suppliers to supply the gift shop; progressing the development of four video trailers targeting different tourist groups; increasing publicity by holding a book signing event; increasing the number of followers on the VisitPalestine Facebook page by 15%

since opening; and hiring a Dublin-based, Palestinian-owned web marketing company to upgrade the website.

Upgrading Commercial Tourism Infrastructure – USAID/Compete is aiding in the expansion and improvement of tourist infrastructure at key sites throughout the West Bank. Buildings are selected based on accessibility and physical charisma, as to provide unique visitor experiences combined with improved tourist resources. The project will also work more closely with the private sector to commercialize tourist infrastructure, attracting private investments that could bring priority destinations to the next level.

On February 28th, an official inauguration for Bethlehem Gallery took place. The initiative rehabilitated and furnished the Arab Woman Union building to operate as a gallery, gift shop, and restaurant. The AWU and HCEF also contributed to furnishing a museum in the building as a complementary element for the whole project. The project aspires to provide tourists with attractions and services in Bethlehem additional to the Nativity Church, extending the length of stay and expenditures of visitors. The event was attended by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), Bethlehem Municipality, the Arab Women Union (AWU), Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF), local media, and local associations.

Milestones

- More than 500 participants attended the 5K Run in Bethlehem.
- CCHP conducted a workshop in Burqin to present the first draft of Burqin's Conservation and Management Plan.
- The rehabilitation of King David Street, the fifth Bethlehem intervention, was completed and initially handed over to the Bethlehem Municipality.
- The rehabilitation and beautification of Bethany's Historic Center was completed and initially handed over to the Bethany Municipal Council.
- USAID/Compete and HLITOA launched the tourism industry branding strategy to HLITOA members.
- HLITOA held two study tours visiting Nablus Sabastiya and Battier.
- Bethlehem Gallery was officially inaugurated.

Lessons Learned

Regarding the Bethlehem 5k Run, it is important to better coordinate with the municipality and the police to ensure proper traffic control. With improved diversion routes, congestion would be eased and safety improved for participants and drivers.

ICT

Summary of Activities

Firm Level Technical Assistance – USAID is seeking to provide technical assistance to non-exporting firms to increase their market access. This new initiative aspires to strengthen the local presence of small companies with tailored assistance and subsequently expand this presence to the region and globe.

In February, the Compete ICT team continued to meet with small software companies to assess their needs, gaps, and potential to receive assistance under this initiative.

Acceleration Activities – USAID is promoting access to finance in the ICT sector by supporting acceleration activities in the West Bank. Leaders Organization, a Ramallah-based non-profit, was supported with a grant under this initiative to establish eZone, a mini tech park, and FastForward, an accelerator providing seed funding, mentorship, technological resources, and training. The grant concluded in December 2014, however, the organization continues to provide acceleration programs.

During February, FastForward announced call for applications for the 4th acceleration round for Palestinian entrepreneurs who are seeking to transform their ideas into viable businesses.

Promoting Multinational Partnerships – USAID/Compete supports Palestinian software development companies in raising their capacity to design new products and sell them worldwide. During fiscal year three, USAID/Compete assisted Palestinian firm Progineer in signing a contract with major multinational company Thompson Reuters to undertake a pilot project to develop natural language processing software.

In February, Progineer, after hiring two employees for the pilot, began implementing projects for an Israeli subsidiary through Thompson Reuters on a long term contract basis. The company is gaining more experience in delivering high caliber projects; however, lack of qualified local resources in the natural language processing (NLP) field is a challenge the company is trying to solve with training. This presents another opportunity to create talented resources demanded by international markets.

Promoting Multinational Partnerships – USAID/Compete supports the establishment of multinational partnerships with Palestinian companies to increase exports and market access. In addition, this initiative promotes professionally trained human resources. Under this initiative, USAID supported Jaffa Net Company to develop the Head-UP Application that helps users to manage his or her online time by blocking certain applications (such as Facebook, Whatsapp, etc.) during certain timeframes chosen by the user. Head-UP Tribe is the startup company which Jaffa Net supports as the developing and technology partner.



Jaffa.Net receiving the Mobility Innovation Award.

In February, Jaffa.net won the 2015 Mobility Innovation Award for the MENA region. The ceremony was held by Oracle in Dubai, and attended by more than 300 companies from the region.

Developing New Value Chains – USAID/Compete is developing new value chains in the market capacity to introduce new services within the software sector. Gaming and animation is specifically targeted as an industry with potential.

On February 18th, a kick off meeting was held with the animation industry in the West Bank. The purpose of the meeting was to identify sector impediments and how they are prioritized, including the best way to develop the talent pool, important markets to expand into, industry business models, a representative entity, and university relationships. Ten individuals from eight companies attended the meeting. The companies will meet again to decide on creating a task force to provide a voice for the subsector and continue development under this initiative.

Strengthening the Local Market – USAID/Compete is supporting the improvement of local networking events to strengthen the Palestinian ICT sector. In particular, Expotech, the biggest national technology event held annually in the West Bank and Gaza, is always attended by local and international figures and draws thousands of participants. Under this initiative, USAID/Compete is working with the official representative of the private ICT sector, the Palestinian Information Technology Association (PITA), to facilitate the 12th Expotech Technology Week, scheduled to take place in September 2015.

On February 25th, Compete signed a grant with PITA to support their participation at Mobile World Congress. The goal is for PITA to identify and invite relevant international speakers and exhibitors for the next Expotech event.

Component B – PITA – PITA is a Palestinian-based organization that represents the ICT industry in the West Bank and Gaza. The association has around 150 members and provides export promotion, capacity building, and advocacy services for the sector. USAID/Compete supports PITA by providing technical assistance to improve their services to their members.

Milestones

- A kick off meeting was held with the animation industry in the West Bank.
- A grant was signed with PITA to support their participation at Mobile World Congress.

Lessons Learned

The kick-off meeting for gaming and animation companies in held mid-February marked the first time that this subsector received support. The result of the preliminary needs assessment meeting gave deep insight on how these companies work. Furthermore, having companies meet for the first time and discuss industry issues was especially effective for companies established within the last three years. This initiative will help the sector decide on a path to develop and grow and make it easier for donors to coordinate assistance.

STONE AND MARBLE

Summary of Activities

New Technology for Environmental Issues – USAID is encouraging creative solutions to environmental issues in the West Bank by generating uses for sludge waste in the stone and marble sector. Three investors, Al-Aqsa Company, Creative Business Solutions, and Abu Kamil Automatic Block, are developing feasibility studies and business plans for new sludge products with USAID/Compete cost-sharing and technical support.

On February 4th, USAID/Compete conducted a field visit to Hebron to meet with ZmZm Company, the largest Palestinian plastic producing company, to discuss the use of stone waste to develop calcium carbonate (CaCO₃) filler, an essential input for the plastic production process.

On February 18th, a meeting was held with Expo Works+, one of the consultants that worked with potential investors to prepare the Sludge Full Feasibility Study. The purpose was to review the technical and financial information and progress towards submitting final feasibility study. A follow-up meeting is scheduled with a potential investor in Nablus on February 24th.

On February 24th, a meeting was held at Abu Kamil Automatic Block to examine current operations, expansion ideas and plans, and investment in a sludge processing factory to produce light weight blocks.

Component B – USM –The Union of Stone and Marble (USM), the national industry representative, offers services related to trade, exports, standards, capacity building and education for members. In particular, USM is creating a marketing department to implement activities that will heighten international awareness of Palestinian stone and provide tailored services to build marketing capacity at the factory level, enabling companies to reach global markets. USAID contributes technical assistance and periodic funding to help expand their spectrum of services, empowering them to better assist beneficiaries and tackle industry issues.

On February 4th, a meeting was held with USM to discuss progress made on the new service unit and to brainstorm potential activities to support a firm-level technical assistance program which will work directly with companies to leverage their capacity.

New Product Development – USAID is targeting firms in the stone and decorative/handicrafts subsector to develop new value-added products. This new initiative seeks to develop desirable products to increase the visibility of the subsectors both locally and internationally.

On February 10th, Compete attended the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce Handicrafts Cluster presentation conducted by UNIDO focusing on Bethlehem Treasures, which represents more than eight handicraft producers.

The producers offer a variety of products including embroidery, ceramics, jewelry, and traditional clothes made from diverse mediums, including mother of pearl, olive wood, clay, glass, and metal. A brief meeting was also held with UNIDO sponsors, a QUARTET representative, a Ministry of National Economy representative, and producers to discuss progress and potential engagement. Further meetings will be conducted to assess how Compete could support the subsectors.



Handicrafts showcased at the Bethlehem Treasures cluster presentation.

Stone & Marble Trade Shows – USAID sponsors the participation of stone and marble sector companies in international trade shows to increase the visibility of Palestinian products. Currently, Compete is working with Paltrade and the Union of Stone and Marble to assist eight companies with unique value-added products to participate in the first annual Middle East Trade Show, scheduled to take place in May. It will be the first show held in Dubai to specifically highlight the stone and marble sector. It will also have a specific interior design hall, allowing Palestinian companies to open new opportunities in niche markets.

On February 26th, Compete met with a Paltrade representative and one participating company, Yaboos Stone Company, to follow up on progress in planning for the trade show. Compete is advising the company on developing a unique product portfolio targeting the gulf market and booth ideas to draw potential clients at the show. Compete also identified possible interventions to address strategic gaps hindering the progress of Yaboos Company, which will be addressed under the new firm level technical assistance program.

Component B – Paltrade – USAID/Compete supports Paltrade, the official Palestinian export agency, in expanding the export horizons for stone and marble businesses. In

particular, Paltrade assists with coordinating trade show participation and providing market information useful to the industry.

Lessons Learned

In upcoming months, Compete will be focusing on reviewing the sludge new product business plans, conducting field visits, preparing for presentations, meeting with investors, and identifying new investor ideas. This will aid in understanding the sector's needs to better design new interventions.

GENDER & YOUTH

USAID/Compete works across the Agribusiness, Tourism, ICT, and Stone & Marble sectors to find opportunities to encourage gender equality and support youth innovation¹. The following section highlights project activities this month with a youth and gender impact.

In February, the Agribusiness Sector held three trainings:

- On 2/10/15, a cooling rooms training held at Nusseibeh Farms was attended by five people. None were female and one was a youth.
- On 1/18/15, a cooling room training held at Al Forat was attended by two people. None were female and both were youth.
- On 1/18/15, a machine training held at Al Aqaba Coop was attended by four people. Three were female, all of which were youth.

GENDER STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

In November 2013, USAID/Compete produced a Gender Strategy aimed at promoting gender equality and participation among women in the Palestinian Territories. The USAID/Compete Gender Strategy rests on four pillars:

- Pillar #1: Promote the success of women in business in the Palestinian Territories, especially those operating within USAID/Compete sectors.
- Pillar #2: Identify new entry points for women within the project's four value chains.
- Pillar #3: Encourage private sector support for the economic participation of women through financial and technical cost share models and incentives.
- Pillar #4: Expand efforts to increase the full participation of women in training and capacity building programs.

This section describes the gender strategy activities within these pillars that took place throughout the month.

Supporting pillars 1, 3, and 4, the agribusiness sector has been working with Al Aqaba Rural Women's Society (ARWS), a women's cooperative from Tubas that generates products from raw materials, to design new packaging for ARWS products. By upgrading to bag-in-bag packaging for dry herbs, ARWS products can now reach hotel markets as part of the UNDP National Product First initiative, as well as meet international market standards for export. In February, ARWS successfully installed the herbs filling and packaging machine and the wrapping machine. Members also completed the training necessary to operate the machines appropriately.

¹ Defined by USAID as aged 14 to 29

Supporting pillars 1, 2, and 3, the tourism sector has been working with the Arab Women’s Union (AWU) to rehabilitate and furnish the AWU building into the Bethlehem Gallery, which will operate as a gallery, gift shop, and restaurant. When it opens, the AWU will supply handicrafts for the gift shop and gallery, as well as assist with development and opening of the restaurant.

FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

VETTING

The commitment to adhere to Mission Order 21 in a timely, business-like manner is essential to the success of USAID’s partnerships with Palestinian companies. Since mid-2013, there has been steady decline in all vetting applications processed in more than 61 days. In February, vetting applications for individuals overall improved, with applications taking less than 30 days increasing by a third of a percent and all other times slightly declining. For companies, the number of applications vetted in less than 30 days also increased by over 0.6% and all other applications taking longer time decreasing.

Figure 1. Length of vetting time for individuals.

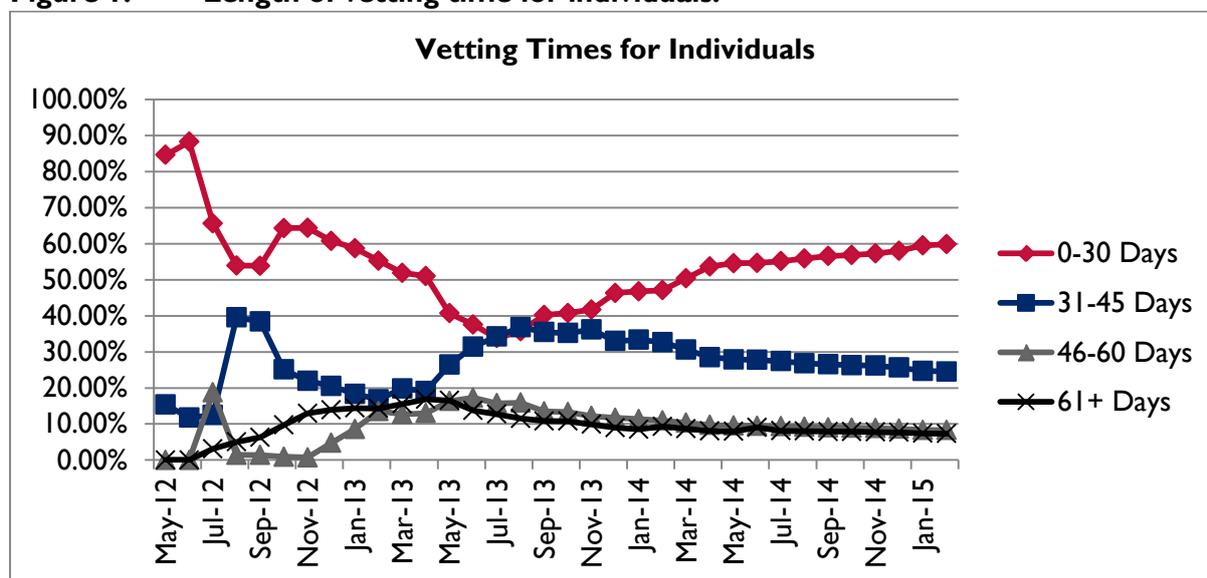
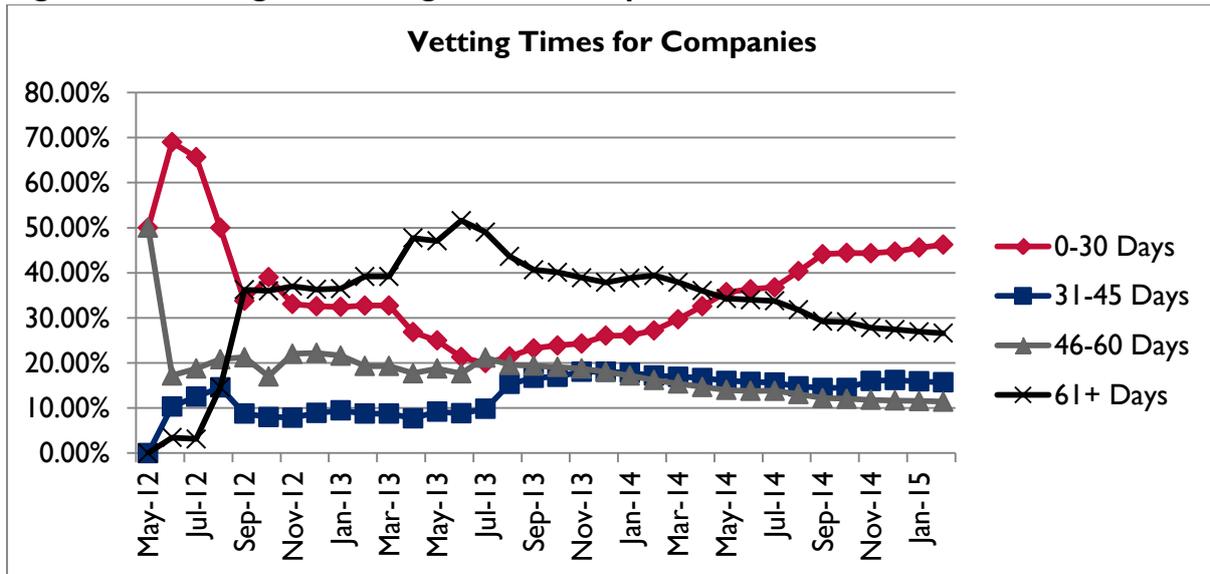


Figure 2. Length of vetting time for companies.



COMPETE PROJECT MONTHLY ACTIVITY/EVENT OUTLOOK

CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY 2015

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| 1 | 2 Area C expansion meeting with CA and design company | 3 | 4 USM progress meeting | 5 | 6 5k Run in Bethlehem Administrator's Assistant site visit | 7 Administrator's Assistant site visit |
| 8 | 9 | 10 Bethlehem Handicraft Cluster presentation at Bethlehem CoC | 11 HLITOA Branding Strategy Launch | 12 Kickoff meeting for Deir Sharaf WWTP water project | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 Kickoff meeting with animation and game companies | 19 Orientation for IbdAA startups | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 Field visit to TWW project in Jenin | 25 Field visit to Jenin and Tubas to see new products | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| | | | | | | |

Upcoming Events

| Agribusiness Sector | Tourism Sector | ICT Sector | Stone & Marble Sector |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------|--|
| <p>February: Field visit/meeting with Head of Palestinian Tax and VAT</p> <p>March 5: Field visit to Dead Sea area regarding new water technologies</p> <p>Dates Festival in Ramallah (postponed)</p> | | | <p>February: Ongoing field visits to develop new initiatives</p> <p>March 18 (tentative): New Sludge Presentation</p> <p>Mid-March: Meeting with USM</p> |